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Russian Liberation Committee,
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Memorandum on the Baltic Provinces Question.

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NO COMPROMISE WITH BOLSHEVISM.

RUSSIA UNITED AND FREE.

RUSSIAN LIBERATION COMMITTEE.

MEMORANDUM

ON THE

BALTIC PROVINCES QUESTION.

PRICE SIXPENCE NET.

173, FLEET STREET, E.C.4.

Kolchak on the Question of Nationalities.

In his reply to the Allied Note of May 26th, 1919, Kolchak says :—

"We are fully disposed at once to prepare for the solution of the questions concerning the fate of the national groups in Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and of the Caucasian and Trans-Caspian countries, and we have every reason to believe that a prompt settlement will be made, seeing that the Government is assuring, as from the present time, the autonomy of the various nationalities.

The Government is ready to have recourse to the collaboration and good offices of the League of Nations with a view to arriving at a satisfactory settlement."

Russian Liberation Committee.

MEMORANDUM

ON THE

BALTIC PROVINCES QUESTION.

By the Author of

"THE FINNISH QUESTION."

173, FLEET STREET,
. . LONDON, E.C. 4. . .

MEMORANDUM

ON THE

BALTIC PROVINCES QUESTION.

The population of the Baltic Provinces does not form a single compact whole, but is composed of several nationalities, not infrequently inimical to one another. In the East (Esthonia and part of Livonia) the bulk of the population consists of Esthonians, ethnographically akin to the Finns. The West (the other part of Livonia and Courland) is inhabited by Letts, distinct both as to ethnographical origin and national characteristics. Germans have likewise been living there for several centuries. They form the landowning class and the middle class in the towns. They have always been in the minority, but until the advent of the Russians they were the ruling nation, and, strong in their feudal privileges, exploited the local population shamelessly. Hence the animosity and hatred of the Esthonians and Letts towards their oppressors, the landowning barons. The Russians living in these provinces were either tradesmen or Government officials of various departments, who frequently strayed far from the path of moral rectitude. Their relations with the local population were determined principally by the policy of the Russian Government. This policy passed through many stages. Alexander I. abolished serfdom in the Baltic Provinces in 1803, sixty years before it was done away with in Russia proper. Then, in the middle of the nineteenth century the Russian Government carried out a series of land reforms, considerably extending the rights of Letts and Esthonians in regard to the purchase of land. At the same time the mediæval feudal privileges were repealed; above all, the right of the landlords to judge their subjects. This law reform, by raising the standard of justice and the legal position of the population, naturally weakened the power of the German landlords; nevertheless, until the reign of Alexander III. (1881-1894) the Baltic Provinces outwardly showed the predominance of German influence and German culture, which, until the middle of the last century, were very pronounced in the Baltic Provinces. The Germans had their own university in Dorpat, their own schools, their own church, their own law and extensive rights of local self-government, with provincial *Landtags* at the head. A great many Germans were in the Russian service, and at times had great influence at Court, this influence being invariably directed to the preservation and strengthening of the autocratic régime. In the reign of Alexander III. the situation

underwent a great change. This Tsar frankly disliked Germans. There was a great decline in German Court influence. Alexander III. did not favour the provincial separativeness of the Baltic Germans, and so there came a period of persecution of German institutions and the russification of the Baltic Provinces. A series of measures were taken to cancel and abolish those legal and cultural privileges which had managed to take such a firm hold for generations. The towns got back their old Russian names. Dorpat, the seat of the university, was renamed Uriev, and the university itself was russified. Many of the professors who lectured in German were forced to retire, and went to Germany,* and were replaced by new professors from Russia. The local population, the Letts and Esthonians, greeted this policy of russification with undisguised malicious pleasure. For one thing, it was pleasant to see the oppressors oppressed—those very German landlords who had so long exploited them pitilessly; besides that, this policy enabled them to develop their own culture more freely. It is at this period that we find Lettish and Esthonian culture beginning to flourish. The Russian Government helped the Letts and Esthonians in every way in the development of their culture, as an offset to the Germans.

It was the same in the reign of Nicholas II., only the policy was less well planned and more unsystematic, being carried out, as it were, by fits and starts, without any definite results being obtained, except the further excitement of race-passions. Thus passed the years 1905 and 1906, with their first revolutionary outbreak. The local population fell upon the Germans with long-pent-up hatred, destroying their estates and not infrequently killing the owners. It was at this time that the Russian autocracy first began to totter, but it soon recovered its balance. The happenings in the Baltic Provinces struck the Russian Government as being too dangerous, as they had shaken the social pillars of the State. It was decided to severely punish the local population. The German landlords who had suffered gladly helped the Russian troops to restore the order that had been threatened, and punished the Letts and Esthonians without mercy. This cost the country a great deal of bloodshed and some awful sacrifices. Order was restored, and the landlords could return to their estates. One can understand what hatred of the Germans now lay hidden in the hearts of the Letts and Esthonians. Sooner or later this had to emerge in terrible forms of social vengeance. In reinstating the German landowners, the Government had only one object in view—not the protection of the Germans who had suffered, but the suppression of the revolution.

* For instance, the famous Schliemann, a rabid anti-Russian.

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In the years that followed, order was maintained on the estates, although one could feel the hidden race-hatred. As soon as the world war broke out in August, 1914, evidence of national dislike again became prominent. The Russian Government was openly distrustful of the Baltic Germans, and it must be confessed, not without sufficient cause, for Germany had been for a long time preparing the soil in its own interest. Many of the Baltic inhabitants sided with the Germans quite openly. The former policy of russification on the one hand, and the extensive spiritual relations with Germany on the other, made a great number, if not all the Baltic Germans sympathise with Germany. To this must be added the absolute conviction, bred of German propaganda, that Germany could not be beaten, and that sooner or later, as they believed, she would conquer the whole world. Only a very small number of Baltic Germans were far-sighted enough to acknowledge the madness of this point of view and its danger to themselves.

Now began persecutions, espionage, exile, the flight of many to Germany—in short, an open struggle of the Russian authorities with the German elements. The Russian Government used the most Draconian measures, and those, of course, did not conduce to pacification. The local population—the Esthonians, and especially the Letts—rose as one man to side with Russia, glad of the opportunity to revenge themselves on the German landowners for the sufferings endured during the revolution of 1906. The local population willingly aided the Russian troops and authorities in their handling of the Germans; they willingly enlisted in the Russian Army, although the Russian Government did not at once make use of them as independent military units.

The relations between the unofficial Russian inhabitants and the local population were always most hearty and friendly. The Russians were not chauvinists, and they did not prevent the Esthonians and Letts from organising their national life, culture, schools, literature or art. The friendly attitude of these races to Russia and the Russians from whom, after all, they had received so much, must always be borne in mind in order to properly appreciate the possible mutual relations of these peoples. As a matter of course, neither before nor during the war was there the slightest sign of any separatism on the part of the Esthonians and Letts. On the contrary, their desire for a closer union with Russia was always clearly felt. Germany they hated. Even if there was any separatism, it was only on the part of the Germans, the majority of whom were openly in favour of Germany. The local population dreaded the latter, being well aware of the difference between Russian and German domination. The Esthonians and the Letts knew full well that Russia would always guard their national cultural development, that

in this respect there was nothing to fear from Russia, whereas Germany, on the contrary, threatened them with the most pitiless germanisation. Every Esthonian and Lett knew what a danger the local Germans were to their race. They knew full well how the germanising influence of the latter would increase if they had a culturally strong and victorious Germany to back them. This is the reason why during the war the local population sided without any hesitation with Russia, and repeatedly showed feelings of friendship towards the latter.

Such was the situation up to the Revolution of March, 1917.

In the early days of the new régime the attention of Petrograd was turned to certain abnormal conditions in the Baltic Provinces. The policy of the Provisional Government towards the Germans did not differ from that of the old régime. For one reason, the Germans themselves showed no sympathy for the Russian Revolution. Rather the contrary, for the events of March were taken as the beginning of the inevitable collapse of Russia and the final victory of Germany. No other attitude could be expected, as the Baltic Germans were well aware that the new, young Russia had no illusions as to their German ideals. The various parties showed their attitude in view of the possible secession of the provinces from Russia—an event greatly desired by Germany as early as Bismarck's time. But though reserved in its relations with the Baltic Germans, the Provisional Government did not at once show its sympathy with the Letts and Esthonians. Overwhelmed with work in Russia itself, where thousands of urgent questions arose every day—nay, every hour —the Provisional Government was unable to give special attention to national questions, and left certain demands of various nationalities without immediate answers. There is another explanation of such a policy. Prince Lvov's Government very correctly considered that the more serious national questions must be postponed till the convocation of the Russian Constituent Assembly, which alone could decide on the future organisation of Russia, and therefore confirm the final agreements with the various nationalities within the limits of the former Empire.

One measure, however, was decided upon almost immediately, at the suggestion of the representatives of the local population, namely, a new subdivision of the Baltic Provinces, in accordance with ethnographical principles. Esthonians inhabit not only what was formerly Esthonia, but the eastern part of Livonia also. In accordance with the ukase of the Provisional Government, issued April 13, 1917, this eastern part of Livonia was joined to Esthonia, and Esthonia was given the right of electing, by universal suffrage, a local Esthonian Council for the whole of Esthonia and that part of Livonia which is inhabited by

Esthonians. This Council, the first national body in Esthonia, was convened on July 14. Gratitude to Russia was a marked feature of this assembly, and there were no separatist tendencies amongst the members. The sole aims of the Council were the national organisation of Esthonia, the strengthening of her culture, and the establishment of local government.

The Bolshevist *coup d'état* interrupted the peaceful development of this policy. From the first the position of the Esthonians was complicated. On the one hand, instead of Russian friendship they were threatened by Bolshevism, with all its consequences of State destruction and complete ruin; on the other hand, there was the no less terrible danger from the West from Germany. The Germans at once took all the necessary steps to finally annex the Baltic Provinces. The local Germans had long been waiting for such a liberation, meaning, as it did, the restoration of the advantages lost by them during the war and the Russian Revolution.

The Germans did not, however, advance immediately. For three months the Esthonians fought against the attacking Bolsheviks. At the end of November the Esthonian Council resolved to convene the Esthonian Constituent Assembly for the purpose of determining the future form of government in Esthonia as an independent State. At the same time the Government declared itself to be the supreme and sovereign organ of government until the convocation of the aforesaid Constituent Assembly. The Bolsheviks, however, with the assistance of Esthonian adherents, got the upper hand and dismissed the Council and subjected Esthonia to their power. In February, 1918, the Bolsheviks were expelled, and a new Esthonian Government was established in Reval, but owing to the advent of the Germans it had only a brief existence. The latter justified their occupation of the Baltic Provinces by Clause VI. of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, by means of which they could at last carry out their long-cherished plan of unifying these provinces under German rule, and of cutting off Russia from the Baltic. As the Germans themselves expressed it, they were firmly determined " to reduce Russia to the limits of Muscovy." The Baltic Germans were, of course, delighted with the advent of German troops. The Esthonian Council and Government were immediately dispersed. The convocation of an Esthonian Constituent Assembly was impossible; instead a new Assembly was convoked under the protection of German bayonets. In this Assembly the leading part was played by the German minority, which now indulged in the most pitiless political revenge.

This continued until Germany was finally defeated on the Western Front. German prestige fell in the East as well as

in the West. On November 14, 1918, in Reval, Esthonia was again declared a republic, and the German landowners were dispossessed of their estates. The struggle against the Bolsheviks was renewed, the latter having declared war on the Esthonians. During the winter Esthonia was gradually freed from Bolsheviks.

Absorbed by these various struggles, the population of the Baltic Provinces completely forgot Russia and Russian interests. Russia might have been non-existent. During that time the local population saw nothing of real Russia, but only the Bolshevik caricature of her. It is not surprising that in the madness of local strife, frequently attended by fearful atrocities and devastation, the Esthonians simply forgot about Russia, and paid no attention to her interests or requirements.

At this period there was a recrudenscence of the perilous German scheme of a Baltic league of the small but independent States fringing the southern coast of the Baltic. The Finns were the chosen instruments. Finland took advantage of the embarrassment of the Russians and the temporary eclipse of Russia. She declared independence, rapidly organised herself into an independent State, and got its communication with both the Scandinavian States and Germany. This example was contagious. It was easy for Finland to take this step, for during the whole of the nineteenth century she had enjoyed many of the privileges of an independent State. It would not suit Finland if she remained alone in this struggle for State independence. If on the other side of the Gulf of Flniand there could be another independent small republic, with a population akin to the Finns, then these two States might easily support one another. Should yet another new republic be formed further along the coast, all the better for the first two, as their power would become still greater. But, whilst propagating this idea, the Finns were fully aware that, by themselves, such small States would be almost defenceless if not supported by some great Power. At first the Finns turned exclusively to Germany, though, as we have seen, this in nowise guaranteed the interests of the Baltic population. The more far-sighted Finns approached the representatives of the Allies in Stockholm with this scheme of a Baltic league, and soon convinced some of these gentlemen that such an arrangement would form a possible defence against Germany's ambitions.

Thus the scheme was launched—a scheme which a short time before had been one of the pet theories of German Imperialism, a scheme of which Bismarck had dreamed. Even after the defeat of Germany, such a political union of Baltic independent States would be very advantageous to Germany. This scheme would, indeed, thrust Russia back to mediæval Muscovy. Cut

off from the Northern sea-routes, she would be deprived of a navy, as it would be absolutely impossible to maintain a fleet in the Gulf of Finland if its mouth were in the hands of foreign States—*i.e.*, Finland and Esthonia. On the other hand, Germany is fully aware of the economic weakness of the Baltic Provinces, and she intends to exploit them without restraint. Thanks to this, in a very short time Germany would become mistress of the whole Baltic coast, and absolute arbiter of the fate of the Baltic Sea.

Moreover, having the Baltic coast at her disposal as an economic colony, Germany would obtain a very convenient strategic base for operations against Russia. In future she would always be able to threaten Russia from the north, and she would find it particularly easy to throw her forces against Petrograd and Moscow. The independence of Esthonia and Latvia (Lettland) would not in any way prevent the realisation of Germany's plan; no protests of theirs would be taken into account. The example of Belgium is a sufficient proof of this. In short, the supporters of such a league of independent Baltic States would be playing into the hands of Germany.

Apart from this German peril, the idea of such a league is quite inadmissible for Russia, and would be a blow from which she would recover only at the cost of bloodshed and new sacrifices. The creation of such a league would mean the return of Russia to the times of the Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich. A new Peter the Great would again appear to reconquer an outlet to the Baltic for Russia. Again it would be necessary to make a window looking out into Europe, and this would have to be done at the expense of enormous suffering to these same small nations, who will never have the strength to withstand the mighty pressure of millions of Russians.

Russia requires an outlet to the sea. This is one of her most vital needs, and any artificial barriers are bound to be swept away at the cost of great sacrifices. It must be remembered what an enormous sacrifice of men and means it cost Russia to make her way to the Baltic during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The extent of these sacrifices clearly and undoubtedly demonstrate how vital are the Russian interests affected. The mere right of commercial transit to seaports cannot, of course, be even considered as a palliative, as this would give Russia's sea-borne trade (which constitutes nearly half her exports) into the hands of foreigners, and would make her economically dependent on other States. The following figures show with sufficient clearness the importance of the Baltic to Russia's foreign trade:—

1911-1913.

Percentage to Total Sea-borne Trade.

	Exports.	*Imports.*
Baltic ports	44.9 per cent.	69.2 per cent.
Black Sea and Sea of Azov ports	49.5 per cent.	15.7 per cent.
Other ports	5.6 per cent.	15.1 per cent.

The total traffic through the Baltic ports formed one-third of Russia's total foreign trade.

The historical processes which drew Russia to the Baltic cannot be regarded as a whim of individuals such as Peter the Great or Catherine II. Quite the contrary. Scientific history has shown very clearly how elemental were the processes by which the Russian State, formed in the centre of the Russian plain, became consolidated and crystallised, and began to seek for outlets to the seas—the Baltic in the north and the Black Sea in the south. After no light struggle these outlets were at last obtained.

For its further economic development, the Russian people must have free access to both seas, otherwise she would again be doomed to the weak and helpless position of a country which can be freely exploited by foreigners. The Germans understood this very well when they made their plans for reducing Russia to its original Muscovite area.

All the more strange is the want of comprehension of the requirements of Russia shown by the Letts and Esthonians, and their blind faith in their own strength. The economic side of this question has had very little light thrown on it, while the strategic side has been ignored altogether.

The arguments used by the Letts and Esthonians against the Bolsheviks and their régime are, of course, very convincing and well-founded. One cannot help agreeing with them when they point to the demoralisation of the Russian Army, to the disorganisation of the machinery of government, to all kinds of atrocities, and to the terrorism to which the Bolsheviks so persistently have recourse. One cannot help acknowledging that among the Esthonians and Letts themselves the example of the Bolsheviks has led to no small amount of disorganisation and has caused no little harm to their attempts at administration. The Bolsheviks have repeatedly brought ruin in their train. They assisted the inauguration of the German power and the return of the all but expelled German landowners. No one will deny this, but it is an argument against the Bolsheviks, and not against Russia, and is of not the slightest importance in

determining the future relations of the Baltic Provinces to Russia.

The Esthonians and Letts often refer to Mr. Wilson's principle of self-determination of nationalities, to which Russia has no objection. Indeed, the Provisional Government showed this clearly. The purely Esthonian and Lettish affairs, the cultural development of Esthonians and Letts, are no concern of Russia's. She is prepared to recognise the widest national autonomy of the Esthonians. In instituting, as far back as April, 1917, the Esthonian National Council, the aim of Prince Lvov's Government was to confirm the right of the Esthonians to a wide national autonomy. At that time the Esthonians were quite content with the measure. It was only later, under the influence of the constantly increasing Bolshevist demoralisation, that the idea of complete separation from Russia arose.

The arguments by which the Esthonians defend the idea of their independence as a State can only be described as somewhat unsound and rather naïve. They base their arguments first of all on their racial difference from the Slavs, which gives them the right to national self-determination in accordance with President Wilson's formula. Of course, no one will deny this racial distinction between the Esthonian-Finns and the Slav-Russians, as no one can deny them the right to national and cultural self-determination. The question is a totally different one, namely, how far such cultural self-determination entails *eo ipso* separation and even independence as a State? The answer to this question must unconditionally be in the negative; these two spheres of cultural self-determination and separation as a State are in no way connected with one another.

As regards cultural self-determination, history clearly shows how tolerant Russia was, even under the old régime, to the national development of the Esthonians and Letts, their schools, their Church, their culture in the widest sense of the term. In this respect they owe all they have to Russia, who unselfishly defended them from Germanisation.

Secondly, the Esthonians and Letts argue (still less convincingly) that Russia will have free transit through their ports, thereby ensuring her maritime export trade. As if mere free transit could satisfy Russia, whose export trade would in all respects be completely dependent on some local Esthonian or Lettish Government. And no mention is made of the fate of Russia's mercantile fleet, which is magnanimously permitted to use "foreign" ports, and will have none of its own ports except Petrograd. Now, the following figures show the place held by Petrograd among the other Russian ports in the Baltic, and the economic importance of these very ports to Russia:—

1912.

	Exports.	*Imports.*
Riga	£21,452,500	£9,933,100
Windau	£9,517,900	£2,426,200
Libau	£6,472,800	£3,826,000
Reval	£2,161,500	£7,149,700
Pernau	£518,700	£193,300
Total for three ports ...	£40,123,400	£23,527,300
Petrograd	£10,826,800	£15,708,100

The third argument is the totally unjust and false statement of certain Esthonians and Letts that they have been oppressed by Russia. As regards this, a study of history shows the direct contrary: they have never been in any way oppressed by Russia. So far from preventing their cultural development, Russia directly assisted it. If, indeed, there were periods when the bureaucratic yoke lay heavy on their shoulders, it must not be forgotten that the Russians themselves suffered no less, and perhaps even more than the Esthonians and Letts. In this connection it is only necessary to remember the martyred Russian revolutionaries —Liberals, Radicals and Socialists. No such complaints were formerly heard. As recently as 1917 the Esthonians showed the most friendly feelings to young Russia, just freed from Tsarism, and to her Provisional Government.

At that time no one spoke of " oppression " or " yoke "; on the contrary, only expressions of gratitude were to be heard. The attitude of the Esthonians to the Bolshevik régime is quite another affair. They suffered terribly from Bolshevism, both physically, by the ruin of their country; and, morally, by the demoralisation of their people. But the whole Russian people cannot be blamed for that, as Russia herself suffered from Bolshevist oppression. If, while Bolshevism was raging, the Esthonians and Letts had taken their national fate into their own hands and declared their independence from *Bolshevist* Russia, no one could blame them; on the contrary, they could only be congratulated on having freed their country from the Bolsheviks.

But this does not entail the definition of the future relations of Esthonia or Latvia to regenerated Russia.

III.

In its principal features, the history of the development of the Lettish problem is very similar to that of Esthonia, only the contrasts, colours and shadows of political history are far more vivid. This is due to many causes. Territorially, Latvia was much closer to the danger of conquest by Germany. On the other hand, the contrasts were accentuated by the national

traits of the Letts, who are more mobile, impulsive and fiery; therefore the national animosity to the local landowners and German immigrants was stronger. To this must be added the peculiar relations of the Letts to the Russian Revolution and to the Bolsheviks in particular.

During the war the Letts were loyal. In 1916 separate Lettish rifle units were formed, which fought well, principally on the North-Western Front, *i.e.*, on their own territory. They had a deep-seated hatred for the Germans, the growth of many generations. The Letts believed in their future liberation from the German yoke from the hated authority of the local landlords. The Russians, on the contrary, had always been regarded by the Letts as friends who had more than once aided them in their struggle against the Germans. Especially strong was their sympathy with the Russian revolutionary movement, in which, indeed, they participated.

The Germans were always inimical to the Letts. Owing to the German frontier being so near, the Letts suffered from the German invasion earlier than those who lived more to the East. Courland was occupied by the Germans almost at the very beginning of the war, and was at once subjected to the most barefaced Germanisation. This was one of the principal reasons why the Provisional Government could not carry out its intentions concerning the Letts, as it was almost at once able to do with regard to the Esthonians, that is to say, to give them national self-determination, in the form of some local Lettish institution, such as a council or committee. In the spring of 1917 Russia retained only a small portion of the territory inhabited by Letts. The rest was in the hands of the Germans. After the fall of Riga in August, 1917, the remaining portion of Lettish territory was also lost.

The general demoralisation of the Russian Army affected the Lettish units. There were many Bolsheviks among them. After the Bolshevik *coup d'état* in November, 1917, the Lettish Rifles went over to the Bolsheviks, and for a long time were the chief supporters of Lenin's Government.

They formed the nucleus of the Red Army, on which the Soviet authorities principally relied. The Lettish regiments suppressed disorders and insurrections, shot down people, and committed atrocities. In January, 1918, together with the sailors, they dispersed the Constituent Assembly, which was to have confirmed the national independence of their own country. They were in no haste to return to their country, but took part in various Bolshevist expeditions for the conquest of Russian provincial towns. Their own land was occupied by the Germans, who gave no quarter to Bolsheviks.

In the territories occupied by the Germans a local Council was established, composed chiefly of representatives of the German landowning class. This Council at once became the docile tool of the Berlin Government; two-thirds of the Council were Germans, though the Letts formed 80 per cent. of the population. On May 8, 1918, this Council, or Diet, voted the establishment of a Grand Duchy of Courland, offering the Crown to the House of Hohenzollern. Later (April 12), on the initiative of the Diet of Courland, similar declarations were made by analogous assemblies, convened by the German Government in the other Baltic Provinces. The protests th Letts made to the State Chancellor, Count Hertling, were na rally ignored. In July, 1918, the Lettish National Council issued a special appeal to the whole world, complaining bitterly of the policy of the Germans as destructive of every conception of the independence of Lettish national and cultural life. In this appeal, among other things, the Letts for the first time demanded the establishment of a Lettish State, the free development and existence of which was to be guaranteed by an international agreement.

Before their defeat the Germans paid very little attention to these protests, being fully aware of the weakness of the Letts. They persistently and consistently carried out the above-mentioned plan of shouldering Russia away from the Baltic.

IV.

The theory of the creation of a Baltic anti-Russian League, which was inspired by Germany, took a form most unfavourable for Russia. It was known as the "Cordon Sanitaire." This theory is very simple in its essence, although highly dangerous to Russia. The idea is that the Bolshevist danger to the West is so great that it is the duty of the Western States to isolate it by a sort of quarantine belt, in order to prevent the further spread of Bolshevism. On the North this belt was to be formed by the Baltic States, which might easily be aided in their struggle against Bolshevism by the landing of Allied troops on the Baltic coast. Thus the Esthonians and Letts, the Finns and Lithuanians would be saved from Bolshevism, and in their turn would serve as a buffer, the very existence of which would be an effective obstacle to the spread of Bolshevism to the West. Instead of getting the assistance asked for, Russia would be left to her own devices. It is easy to imagine the feelings this selfish theory evoked in the hearts of all loyal Russians, hundreds of thousands of whose countrymen had laid down their lives in the Allied cause, and who by their sacrifices have repeatedly saved the West from the German danger. Moreover, this policy would undoubtedly create a prolonged animosity in the heart of Russians towards the Baltic States, an animosity

which, sooner or later, would lead to consequences very harmful to these small nations.

This theory has been opposed by arguments both political and economic. The Baltic Provinces cannot by themselves withstand German domination, and Russia cannot be cut off from the Baltic, as she was in the Middle Ages. Economic considerations show, firstly, that a free outlet to the sea is necessary for Russia; and, secondly, that it is absolutely impossible for the Baltic Provinces, once they are separated from Russia, to exist in economic independence.

Russia has always lived by agriculture; it has been the staple source of national wealth. In return for her surplus agricultural produce she receives the industrial products she requires—products which her young industries are yet unable to supply in adequate quantities. This barter is carried on principally by means of the sea-borne exports of Russian agricultural produce. Two sea routes are open to Russia, both equally indispensable to her agricultural export trade, namely, the Black Sea and the Baltic. The former serves the needs of the South, and the latter is the export route for all the agricultural black-earth Central Provinces, now directly connected by railways with the Baltic ports. It was through these ports that, during the whole of the nineteenth century, Russia's principal exports, such as grain, cattle-breeding products and other raw materials found their way abroad. Of late years, however, the problems of the Russian export trade have grown considerably, owing to the increase in the traffic on the great Siberian main line. As a consequence, not only the Central Russian exports, but those of Siberia also found their way to the Baltic, and the Baltic ports became, as it were, the emporiums and outlets for Siberian produce. Thus a splendid route was opened up from distant Siberia to Western Europe. For instance, Siberian butter was exported, butter which competed successfully with Danish or Finnish butter in the Western markets. And, lastly, it is necessary to remark that the waterways, along the Western Dvina and other Western rivers, also pass through the Baltic ports, and that their importance in relation to the Russian export trade is by no means insignificant, and is always increasing.

In its turn, the export trade gradually conduced to the development of agriculture, and at the same time helped the growth and development of the seaport towns through which an incessant stream of Russian exports flowed. In this respect Riga and Reval owe a great deal to the transit trade, while the growth of Libau and Windau was directly due to the export trade. Both parties interested in Russia's export trade, *i.e.*, the people in the Western States and the Russian agriculturists,

gradually began to increase and strengthen Russian exports, and Russia gradually became one of the principal granaries of the world. This was, of course, possible only on one condition—*i.e.*, the political as well as the economic unity of the State, as on the unity of the State and its economic centre depend the proper development and satisfaction of the common Russian agricultural and industrial interests. It must not be forgotten that the different localities of Russia produce very different classes of commodities, and themselves need various articles in exchange for their own products. In this respect it is only necessary to bear in mind the difference between the interests of the Central, Southern, Siberian, Trans-Caucasian, Moscow, or Donetz regions, etc., etc. If there be no concord in the economic policy of the Russian State, one can confidently assert that many of its component parts will suffer, as their interests will either remain completely unsatisfied, or will be at least inadequately secured. Separate parts of Russia, with their different needs and interests, supplement, as it were, or sometimes even replace, one another. In this respect the fact that this internal interchange of commodities was duty-free was very important, as it undoubtedly must disappear as soon as there are detached independent parts (*e.g.*, the Baltic Provinces). The same must be said of the relations with the outer world, that is, international agreements, in the conclusion of which the unity of the internal policy has always played a great part. Finally, every other kind of obstacle to Russian trade may arise from the simple fact of the existence of a series of petty, independent States on the borders of Russia. Let us take, for instance, the monetary question. Some small State may introduce its own coinage, thereby creating endless difficulties in commercial settlements and in the whole interchange of commodities in Russia. Then come the questions of commercial policy, of various prohibitions or of measures of encouragement, which may be taken by the Governments of the seceded territories, without any regard to the interests or requirements of Russia.

Such is Russia's side of the question. Still more simple is the consideration of the economic side of the independent life of the Baltic Provinces. This independent economic life is quite impossible, and must lead to the speedy economic enslavement of the provinces by some great Power. Although the Baltic Provinces are agricultural, their output is inadequate. Taken as a whole, the percentage of the agricultural production is not a high one. In the case of some agricultural products a shortage exists, owing to which such products have always to be imported from the Russian provinces. This applies to wheat and sugar, for instance. There is only an abundance of potatoes, great quantities of which are used by the distilleries, while flax-growing is the only agricultural industry of any commercial importance.

The economic development of the Baltic Provinces, on the whole, is not striking. To sum up, the population is comparatively sparse*; the agricultural produce grown is insufficient for local requirements, the population is in need of certain imported articles, and it does not possess the necessary elements for the development of home industries. Above all, in the Baltic Provinces there is a total absence of all coal, iron or other mining industries. The industries which, in spite of the above-mentioned shortage of raw material, have managed to thrive in recent times in the Baltic Provinces, have done so only because the manufacturers have had access to the extensive Russian market, and at the same time have been protected from foreign competition by the high Russian Customs tariffs. Moreover, it is necessary to bear in mind that the few industrial undertakings which do exist in these provinces are principally owned, not by the local inhabitants, the Letts and Esthonians, but by Russians or Germans. If these provinces are separated from Russia, the Russians will have no inducement to work there, and as for the Germans, they are now subject to such persecution that they prefer to leave the Baltic States, taking their money with them. But, of course, if these provinces come into the sphere of German influence, then German capital will again come forward. The recent industrial development which the Esthonians and Letts refer to was due to the mobilisation of Russian war industries, and must now come to an end. Thus the Baltic Provinces would at once lose all these undoubted material advantages if they were separated from Russia. The Customs frontier and tariffs would be outside their borders, and not only would they not protect the Baltic industries, but, on the contrary, would debar them from the Russion market, with its raw materials, and give them over to the outer world, *i.e.*, to the German peril. The provinces would likewise lose all the enormous advantages of Russian transit of Russian exports of foodstuffs and other articles, as these would, of course, be unable to stand any substantial Customs tariff imposed by Russia. Under such circumstances and with a Russian tariff wall on their border, the economic prosperity of the Baltic Provinces would in a short time collapse like a house of cards.

Thus, should the Baltic States become independent and, as a consequence, be deprived of Russian exports, they will either be economically ruined, or become parasites of Great Russia, or else be exploited by Germany. From pre-war data, of the total Russian exports, the sea-borne trade accounts for a little over 65 per cent., while the Baltic trade absorbed from 31 to 35 per cent. In other words, at least one-third of the total Russian

* In Esthonia there are 29 inhabitants to 1 square verst (0.66 mile). In Courland the proportion is 33; in Livonia 43; whereas in the Central Russian provinces it is from 50 to 75 inhabitants per square verst.

exports used to go by the Baltic Sea route. The direct exports through Petrograd were compartively small, as, first of all, the town is farthest from the West; and, secondly, the port is frozen many months in the year. Thus the main stream of exports flowed through the seaports of the Baltic Provinces. According to the volume of exports, the towns rank as follows: (1) Riga, (2) Windau, (3) Libau, (4) Reval; while as regards imports, the order is as follows: (1) Riga, (2) Reval, (3) Libau, (4) Windau. The principal exports are raw materials, then come foodstuffs. Russia built her railways with the avowed object of directly connecting the Baltic ports with her Central Provinces, which export grain and other articles.

Further, it should be noted that, in seceding from the Russian State, the Baltic Provinces would be obliged to take upon themselves a portion of the Russian National Debt, and, in particular, part of the enormous expenditure which was incurred by the world war, and also to reimburse Russia for the outlay on all the port and railway constructions which these new States would take over for their own use.

One may say beforehand that these payments will be a heavy financial burden on the young States.

Owing to the war, of late years Russia's military expenditure has grown incredibly. The transference of a proportionate part of the National War Debt to independent Esthonia and Latvia would burden their budgets to such a degree that no taxes or duties will be sufficient to cover the expenditure, and the local population would not be able to sustain the burden.

The distribution of the National Debt amongst separate territories might be done according to one or two systems—either on the basis of State revenue receipts and the amount of expenditure for a given territory, or else proportionately to the number of inhabitants per square verst. The first method, which is favoured by the representatives of non-Russian nationalities, is unsatisfactory, as the revenue receipts and expenditure used formerly to be distributed amongst the different provinces in a great variety of ways. Some provinces lying along the borders of the Empire raised Customs revenue, harbour dues, export duties, etc., which could not be collected in the provinces inland; and, *vice versa*, there were receipts and expenses in the inland provinces which did not exist in the frontier provinces. Because of this, the only correct and just method would be to distribute the National Debt in proportion to the density of the local population. Under such a system of distribution, the Baltic Provinces, on their secession, would have to shoulder 1.6 per cent. of the total Russian National Debt, *i.e.*, about eight milliard roubles.*. It is impossible to imagine how such an economically

* This works out at Rs. 3,000 per head, including infants.

small unit as the Baltic Provinces, divided, moreover, into two independent parts, could stand such a National Debt, laid upon it at the very beginning of its existence as an independent State. And this does not include the amount of other budget expenditure on ports and railways. Once these latter become the property of the aforesaid young States (the other alternative, *i.e.*, leaving them in the possession of Russia, would hardly be acceptable to the Letts and Esthonians), they have to reimburse the Russian Treasury and Russian people for the cost of the aforesaid property, and the railways alone are property of enormous value.

On the other hand, the Baltic Provinces would be deprived of the enormous revenue from the transit of Russian goods (as Russia would deflect her exports to other channels), and there would be a decline in local industries, as both Russian and German capital would be withdrawn. On their Southern frontier they would find a new Customs cordon, hedging in the Baltic Proveinces and cutting them off from Russian raw materials and foodstuffs. The whole of the financial burden would thus lie heavily on the local taxpayers, and would naturally be quite beyond their capacity to pay. This would only give every encouragement to German influences and exploitation. Under such circumstances, in a short time the Baltic Provinces would become subject German colonies. After commercial and industrial exploitation would come immigration, and the German elements among the population would constantly increase.

V.

Thus we come to the inevitable conclusion that neither economically nor politically could the Baltic Provinces exist as independent States, either separately from each other, or even leagued together. Cut off from Russia, they would inevitably fall under the political influence and economic exploitation of Germany, who is only waiting for her chance, and who has long been preparing by diligent propaganda, for such a Germano-Baltic League against Russia.

It must not be forgotten that Russia also has very vital interests in the Baltic question, both economic and political. The secession of the Baltic Provinces would cause enormous injury to the economic development of the central agricultural provinces and to Russian trade and young industries. We have already explained in detail all that may threaten Russia in this respect. We have seen how this would undermine the Russian export trade, while at the same time causing irreparable damage to the Baltic Provinces themselves. The cessation or decrease of Baltic exports would at once unfavourably affect the Russian market, commerce and industries, and not only those of the Central Provinces, but even those of distant Siberia. Agriculture

would be obliged to seek other outlets for its exports and imports. We have shown that Russia could not be satisfied with the right of transit alone. Her export trade cannot be made dependent on the whims of some local government in the towns of Riga or Reval, which would impose its Customs tariffs on such exports, take other measures unfavourable to Russian exports, or introduce its own coinage, weights and measures, thereby inevitably retarding Russia's trade. The whole development of the latter has always depended on this very internal freedom, this absence of a Customs line, and on a reunited Government. How profitable was Russian transit to the Baltic Provinces and towns is clearly seen from their modern development. The economic prosperity of Riga, Libau and other towns was firmly based on it. With their secession from Russia all this will be lost to them, and for a long time.

But still more important to Russia is the second aspect of the question—the national defence of the Russian State. Germany's policy during the whole of 1918 clearly showed every Russian the strategic dangers threatening Russia from the Baltic battleground. The Baltic Provinces are a splendid military base for an enemy who wants to wage war on Russia. By disposing her forces along the Baltic coast, such a Power would have free access to the very heart of Russia—Moscow and the Central Provinces, not to speak of completely defenceless Petrograd. In the Baltic Provinces the enemy's forces would find everything they wanted as a base for attack on Russia—sufficient food, an unthreatened rear and secure communication with their home bases. And not only for a small expeditionary force, but for a large modern army, or even a group of armies, which Germany or some other enemy might freely supply with food, munitions and personnel in increasing proportions. The free sea route at their back would be of enormous service as a means of strategic military communication. One cannot imagine a more favourable and advantageous base for any Power which intends to strike at the Russian State. It is, therefore, no wonder that the Russian people will never be able to look calmly at the military, political, economic or other preparation of such a base for attack by an enemy.

Furthermore, there is another question closely connected with this, namely, the existence of the Russian Navy as an instrument of national defence, for the protection of Russia's seaborne trade and as a guarantee that the Baltic will not be turned into a German *mare clausum* (as was the case in 1918) in which Germany would reign supreme. Not only is it impossible for the Russian Fleet to carry out its strategic aims, but it cannot even exist, without a secure base in the Gulf of Finland. How strong such a base can be has been very clearly shown by the

late war, when the weak Russian Fleet possessed a splendid base in the Finnish Gulf, fortified by Reval-Nargen on the one side, and Sveaborg-Porkala on the other. There were two wings stretching from this principal position: one to the East toward Hango and the Aland Islands, and the other to the West, along the Gulf of Riga and the islands of Desel and Dago. Had it not been for the Bolshevist demoralisation, the Russian Fleet might have defended the Finnish Gulf and the approaches to Petrograd until the end of the war.

Thus, for her maritime defence Russia must have the above-mentioned naval base and wings at her disposal. Now one of these wings stretches along the Northern coast of the Baltic Provinces. It is easily understood that in this case Russia requires complete freedom of action there; she must have the right to build fortifications there, and of taking measures for the defence, both of the naval base and of the coast itself. The experience of the late war has clearly shown what an important part this question plays in the life of the Russian State. Thus, one of the most important tasks of the Russian Navy will always be the prevention of landings of troops along the Baltic coast, and, therefore, the prevention of any possibility of the enemy using the Baltic Provinces as a convenient strategic base for deploying his forces and advancing into the interior of Russia. Another and no less important task is the active protection of Russian sea-borne trade through the Baltic ports; and, lastly, the third task, which is entailed, so to speak, by the preceding, prevention of any other Power (Germany, for instance) from turning the Baltic Sea into a *mare clausum*.

It is of the highest importance to Russia that her line of defence should pass along the sea and sea-coast where, as the late war has shown, she can defend herself against the enemy's landing, and not in the interior, along the southern frontiers of the Baltic Provinces, where there are no means of defence, where new fortresses would have to be built, etc.

No mere paper guarantee of neutrality can in any case be satisfactory to Russia, as we all know too well what neutrality is worth in modern times. In declaring war on Russia, no Power would abstain from using against Russia the highly advantageous position of the Baltic Provinces, whereas Russia would be almost defenceless. No nation with any regard for its future would submit to such conditions.

There is one more consideration which prevents Russia from allowing the Baltic Provinces to become independent States. We are thinking of international relations. Separated from Russia, these provinces might carry on their own international policy, in consequence of which it might very easily happen that

they would enter into some agreement or league against Russia with Germany or some other country. It can easily be understood that Russia cannot permit such a state of things, and she will always demand an active control over all the international relations of these provinces.

For the Baltic Provinces there is, therefore, only one way out of this difficult position—to become members of the Russian State with the right to the widest national and cultural autonomy; Russia can solemnly promise not to interfere in the life of these provinces, letting them have the widest autonomy and complete self-government, with their own local institutions.

These provinces, in their turn, must let Russia have a free hand in protecting her own Russian interests, in which we include, as has already been mentioned, first of all economic interests, and then the interests of national defence. The Baltic Provinces would only lose by separation from Russia, as they would make enemies of Russia for many generations to come; whereas, by remaining in the Russian State, they would, on the contrary, secure the further free development of their national culture and national life.

CONCLUSIONS.

1. Both for economic and political reasons the Baltic Provinces cannot exist as independent States, separated from Russia.

2. Economically these provinces would, on secession, at once fall under the influence of German exploitation, as their own economic development is still too weak. They would be deprived of Russian imports and transit trade, as well as the bulk of industrial capital, which belongs wholly to either Russians or Germans, and not to the local population. They totally lack the necessary industrial raw materials (flax excepted), and have an inadequate supply of many foodstuffs, which are imported from Russia (*e.g.*, wheat and sugar); the Russian Customs cordon would finally ruin the local interchange of commodities.

3. As in case of secession, these provinces would be obliged to take part of the Russian National Debt upon themselves, proportionately to the number of their population, this would so embarrass their young Budget that the population would not be able to bear the burden of taxation. Over and above their share of the National Debt, they would have to reimburse Russia for her expenditure on harbour and railway works.

4. Russia is vitally interested in having free access to the Baltic. The seaports have of late become termini and outlets for exports not only of the agricultural provinces of Central Russia, but likewise of distant Siberia, owing to the successful working of the Siberian railway.

5. Politically, the Baltic Provinces cannot exist as independent States, owing to their small area and weakness; they form a far too convenient base where any enemy of Russia (especially Germany) could freely deploy an army, however large, for the purpose of dealing a blow at the very heart of Russia, as, owing to the defencelessness of the inner frontier, all ways would be open to Petrograd and Moscow.

6. Independent Baltic Provinces would cut Russia off from the Baltic Sea, and throw her back politically to the times of mediæval Muscovy, and all the historical processes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries would have to be gone through all over again. It would likewise make the existence of the Russian Navy impossible, as the latter would be deprived of the only secure base, the Gulf of Finland and Riga, while the Baltic would be given over to German enterprise.

7. Russia could not permit the Baltic Provinces to have an independent foreign policy; separated from Russia, they might enter into some agreement or even league against Russia, which might be utilised by the enemies of the latter.

8. Germany, since the time of Bismarck, has been persistently working out a plan of such a secession of the Baltic Provinces, so as to cut Russia off from the Baltic. The success of the Germans is due not only to military conquest, but likewise to persistent political propaganda, carried on for many years.

9. It is Germany that would be the gainer should these provinces become independent States. First of all, Germany would thus obtain splendid colonies for economic exploitation and emigration; and, secondly, the Baltic Provinces would make an especially useful strategic base to threaten Russia from; Russia would be completely deprived of her navy and the naval defence of her frontiers. Such a policy, through German influence, would board up the window which Peter the Great made into Western Europe.

10. It is an utter impossibility for Russia to go back to absolute autocracy, and therefore the Letts and Esthonians have nothing to fear in that respect.

11. In view of the exceeding political and economic weakness of the Baltic Provinces, there is only one way open to them, namely, to enter the Russian federation of their own free will, under guarantee that they will be allowed the fullest national and cultural autonomy and complete self-government. By remaining members of the Russian federation, the Baltic Provinces will secure for themselves the free development of their national culture and their national mode of life.

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